

From the director

Introducing

CAL FIRE

Just over one year ago I assumed my duties as director of California's largest fire and resource management department. Our department has gone through some very positive transitions in the last year. I believe that these changes will not only make our department stronger as a whole but will allow us to more efficiently protect the lives, property and resources of California.

The most recent is the adoption of the name CAL FIRE. I know many in the department have been working hard for many years to see this day. I want to thank the Branding Committee and Co-Chairs Dave Titus and Unit Chief Bill Holmes for their hard work in implementing this new brand. Over the last 100 years our mission has become increasingly complex and the length of our full department name reflects that. The use of CAL FIRE incorporates all aspects of our department; Fire Protection, Resource Management and the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Initially, you will start seeing CAL FIRE at some of the following places;

1. New Nomex
2. New equipment striping
3. Telephone answering
4. Facility Signs
5. E-mail signatures

The Branding Committee has outlined a number of other applications for CAL FIRE that will be rolled out in the future. I want to stress the importance that only approved applications of CAL



FIRE be used. It is also duly important to note that no materials, signs, insignias or decals shall be destroyed during the implementation of CAL FIRE. Therefore all new materials will be transitioned in as old supplies run out.

Another major change that is important to me is the full merger of CAL FIRE and the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Our two departments have never really been integrated into one since the merger in 1995. OSFM supports the mission of CAL FIRE by focusing on fire prevention; therefore I have moved the entire Fire Prevention & Law Enforcement bureau under the Fire Marshal, bringing OSFM's building, fire, and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) codes and CAL FIRE's Wildland fire prevention responsibilities under one roof. In January, we also moved some field Deputy State Fire Marshals into CAL FIRE offices. There are still more changes that need to be made to fully integrate both departments, but I

am very happy with the progress so far.

In 2006 a number of historic advances were made under CAL FIRE leadership. During the raging Sawtooth Complex in July, CAL FIRE was the first fire agency to use the DC-10 Supertanker. Tanker 910 was able to lay a line of retardant 1.3 miles long and approximately 26 feet wide in less than one hour. The DC-10 was also used throughout the season on the Day Fire, Rico Fire, and Esperanza Fire as well as in Washington State. Crews on the ground reported good coverage and saturation. With the help of the DC-10, ground crews and our air fleet were able to attack wildfires head-on.

Another first in firefighting technology was the use of an unmanned aircraft to help map the fire's perimeter. The Altair Unmanned Aircraft flew over the Esperanza Fire in November and helped give ground crews a better idea of exactly where the fire had burned. Look for this aircraft in the future to help map fires faster and more efficiently.

In June of 2006 the Mexican government asked Governor Schwarzenegger and CAL FIRE for assistance in battling a wildfire in Baja, Mexico. CAL FIRE often responds to fires along the San Diego / Mexico border but this was the first time that CAL FIRE responded this far into Mexico.

The department made administrative progress in a number of important areas. A base bud-

get deficiency was addressed, the CAL FIRE Firefighters contract was rolled over for two years with significant improvements for the firefighter I classification, a major step was taken to provide an inversion fix for incumbent supervisors and managers, appointments were made to over 20 key leadership positions, two-year work plans were developed for every major program, succession plan implementation was funded and begun, a statewide supervisors and managers meeting was held for the first time in many years, department wide communications improvements were initiated, Schedule A and Amador costs were clarified, two significant Schedule A contracts were added in Placer County and San Diego County, and mission clarification and discussions with key political bodies are well underway.

It also was a difficult year for CAL FIRE. On March 13 Captain Patrick Henry suffered a fatal heart attack while on duty at Parlin Fork Conservation Camp in Mendocino County. On September 6 Battalion Chief Rob Stone and CAL FIRE/DynCorp Pilot George "Sandy" Willett died in the line of duty east of Springville in Tulare County when their OV-10 air tactical aircraft crashed. Six days later Battalion Chief Steve Faris was killed in an off-duty traffic collision in San Bernardino County. In November CAL FIRE joined the US Forest Service in mourning the death of five USFS firefighters who lost their lives battling the

Esperanza Fire. It is times like this that we must remember and honor our fallen brothers and sisters and make sure that we learn from the accidents in hopes of preventing them.

As we move forward in 2007 and prepare for the fire season ahead, we have every reason to look to a bright future for CAL FIRE. We will continue the re-organization of the department to better meet the needs of our mission. I want to stress the importance for all employees, from deputy directors in Sacramento to seasonal firefighters in remote locations, to understand that great customer satisfaction, improved communications, inclusiveness, and consensus building are the keys to a great organization.

I look forward to the year ahead and I know that, just as 2006 saw many historic firsts for firefighting, CAL FIRE will continue to lead the nation in resource management, fire and life safety, and firefighting innovations.



The Spring 2007 edition of the communiqué will have more on CAL FIRE. Updates are also posted on the intranet under "CAL FIRE Update."